[1] Introduction

161 According to the census referred to hereafter, the Bambara number more than 500,000, thus forming one of the largest population groups in West Africa.

184 This group is not homogeneous; however, in addition to its language, which is in fact its characteristic element, it does have certain basic customs common - at least in a general way - to all its members. It is possible to observe this common heritage by [121] studying one section of the group, and such is the purpose of this work.

121 The Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta, who concern us here, have the distinction over their congeners of having evolved well-127 known empires. To the history of these empires, already known through the research of my predecessors, I shall add new documentation, based primarily on an unpublished chronicle of the empire of Ségou. This chronicle is interesting, among other reasons, because it is entirely the work of one of the traditionists whose erudition, as reliable and exact as possible within the limitations of native competence, merits our serious attention. Indeed, my book is simply a detailed commentary on this chronicle, buttressed by knowledge acquired on the spot during the course of my administrative duties and by information obtained from the works listed in the bibliography.

121 It should be noted that, though these documents and this store of knowledge make it easy enough to describe the customs if one limits oneself to generalities, it is on the other hand a difficult and delicate task to define the customs as they are applied to given social manifestations and to try to deduce the principles underlying these manifestations.

This is all the more true in that experience acquired elsewhere [2] is often, instead of a help, a reef which is as perilous as it is appealing. So it is that one is naturally tempted to apply to native institutions the nomenclature and the fundamental characteristics of institutions - especially European ones - which are assumed to be comparable. When origins and development are thus transferred to a foreign context, native custom is deformed. It can

[9] B. Population Movement

162 In 1912, Delafosse in Haut-Sénégal et Niger [Upper Senegal and Niger] gave a total of 538,450 Bambara in the following regions: [514]

Bamako	146,966	Bougouni	104,216	Ségou	109,758
Sikasso	30,000	Kita	2,339	Bafoulabé	2,100
Koutiala	30,035	Goumbou	22,110	San	20,103
Sokolo	19,996	Djenné	17,246	Niafunké	16,000
Nioro	9,355	Mopti	7,277	Bandiagara	928

●161 All of these figures are notably lower than current ones. However, one must not infer a population increase too hastily. The difference in population figures result of better census methods rather than of a real increase.

Moreover, current demographic information must be considered as still approximate. In fact, censuses may go on for several years in a single region, and those of certain cantons are not yet finished. A large part of the population still avoids the census in order to escape taxes and military service. In certain villages the clandestine population may be as large as the declared population.

167 A number of the Bambara who leave the country temporarily as migratory workers in Guinea, Senegal, the Ivory Coast, and the Gold Coast escape all registration.

161 Finally, as soon as we leave the purely Bambara region of the
563 Ségou circle to go into the region of Bougouni, for example, a large part of the population counted as Bambara is in fact of mixed origin, Foula, Malinké, but follows Bambara custom, often no longer speaking the language.

563 This simple enumeration shows how rare it is to find a Bambara ethnic bloc which is not heavily mixed with other tribes. This dispersion is doubtless the result of a complicated historical evolution as we shall see further on.

But we can already point out that the link which unites the different peoples is the chefferie. The different peoples under a common chief little by little consider themselves to be of the same people as their chief. Sometimes the chief may have adopted the nationality of the country whose direction he has assumed.

As an indication, we give the following tables, furnished by the Bureau of Political Affairs of the Sudan. It has not yet been possible to evaluate the rates of births and deaths nor to establish

[text continues on p. 13]

3: Reques--12 S-4 (no date) 1954 FA8 Bambara FA8

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I. Demographic Situation of the Population of African Status

Circle	Area in Sq. Km.	On 12/31/49	On 12/31/50	Density per Sq. Km.	Comparison between 1949 and 1950	
					Plus	Minus
Bafoulabé	39,000	131,603	137,347	3.54	5,744	
Bamako	57,405	451,377	499,034	7.96	47,657	
Bandiagara	53,000	307,936	307,946	5.81	8	
Bougouni	34,000	202,907	208,984	6.14	6,077	
Gao	411,170	215,875	221,883	0.53	6,008	
Goundam	55,000	134,312	130,935	2.48	2,623	
Kayes	21,000	119,294	117,017	5.57		2,277
Kita	37,000	103,132	105,550	2.65	3,418	
Koutiala	20,665	187,706	190,645	9.22	2,939	
Mopti	14,300	156,116	156,194	10.92	78	
Niafunké	22,500	129,463	129,558	5.76	95	
Nioro	56,000	256,149	260,413	4.5	4,164	
San	15,000	182,142	185,187	12.34	3,045	
Ségou	52,000	362,215	369,921	7.11	7,706	
Sikasso	20,475	206,828	207,038	10.11	210	
Timbuktu	283,700	90,981	102,475	0.36	11,494	
Totals	1,192,215	3,237,705	3,337,127	2.79	101,266	2,277
					Plus: 98,989	

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II. Demographic Situation of the Nomadic Population [in the Sudan]

		Moors		Touareg	
1940:	Gao	9,494		57,945	
	Goundam	2,885	23,322	40,757	139,236
	Timbuktu	10,943		40,934	
1944:	Gao	18,812		74,357	
	Goundam	2,505	34,073	16,105	128,057
	Timbuktu	12,756		37,595	
1959:	Gao	19,078		77,640	
	Goundam	2,743	37,723	17,004	153,246
	Timbuktu	15,502		58,599	

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III. General Movement of the Population in the Past Ten Years

	Sedentary and Semi-nomadic	Nomadic
1940	2,750,950	163,000
1941	2,790,000	
1942	2,840,000	
1943	2,870,000	162,000
1944	2,900,000	
1945	2,800,000	
1946	2,810,000	
1947	2,840,000	
1948	3,125,000	
1949	3,237,000	
1950	3,337,000	190,000
Total increase	586,000	27,000
Rate of increase	21%	16%

An age profile of the population. The censuses of future years will no doubt permit a better study of the country's demography.

[11] IV. General Movement of the Urban Population

161 The urban population numbers 220,317, or 6.5 percent of the 162 total population.

The principal urban centers are: Bamako, Kayes, Ségou, Mopti, Sikasso, and Gao. Except for Gao, the growth is considerable.

Cities	1939	1950	Increase	Percent of Increase
Bamako	32,761	85,000	52,239	162.5
Kayes	15,894	23,275	7,381	46.4
Ségou	8,391	15,335	6,944	83
Mopti	6,379	9,208	2,829	45
Sikasso	11,817	19,558	7,741	15.2
Gao	6,923	7,231	308	4.90

C. Emigration

167 It is rarely definitive. It is undertaken either for commercial reasons or from the desire of the young to earn enough to pay the bride price of their fiancée. It affects chiefly the circles of Gao, Timbuktu, Niafunké, Goundam, Mopti, Ségou, and Bamako. The region most often visited is the Gold Coast.

At Timbuktu, there is caravan traffic with Morocco by way of Taouedi and Tindouf, and with the Touat.

At Bandiagara, certain cantons (Dinangourou, Ibi, Iréli) experience a traditional temporary emigration to Upper Volta where the young go to work a year or two and then return.

At Bafoulabé, the emigration movement towards French Guinea remains very weak, about 20 persons.

At Bougouni, about 1,500 young people annually leave for the Ivory Coast, following the example of the Dioula. This is a seasonal movement, but the youths often prolong the venture year after year before going home, and some of them ultimately settle on the Ivory Coast.

At Nioro, from Bakounou northwards (circle of Aioun and Atrouss [Aioun el Atrous?], there is an agricultural nomadism to new lands. This migration from one settlement to another is concerned only with the fertility of the soil, without regard for the border at Nioro and Yélimané. One also notes temporary emigrations towards